

**Valley View Chapel**  
**October 9, 2011**  
**Authentic Christianity 16**  
**“Rolex Christians”**  
**I John 5:1-12**

**Introduction**

There are people who think they own a real Rolex, but in reality all they own is a fake. It's a fake because it doesn't have the characteristics of the genuine article. As a matter of fact, if it has *most of the characteristics* of an authentic Rolex, but not all of them, then it's still a fake. As the old saying goes: “Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.”

One purpose of I John is to present the characteristics of an authentic follower of Jesus Christ. False teachers were saying that the only true Christians possessed a “secret knowledge” in which the mysteries of God were revealed. Only a favored few had been granted this classified information.

The Apostle John rose up and replied that authentic Christianity had nothing to do with gaining “secret knowledge” and unlocking “sacred mysteries.” Christianity like that is as fake as the \$15 Rolex I bought at Battery Park 20 years ago.

Throughout I John, the old apostle called his readers' attention to the characteristics of a genuine “Rolex Christian.” In the first 5 verses of the fifth chapter, he gathered together 4 of those characteristics in one place and encouraged the people to test their authenticity against the standard. Like a genuine Rolex, true Christians possess all three of these characteristics. 3 out of 4 aren't enough to validate our claims to being a genuine disciple of Christ.

So what are the 4 characteristics of a genuine “Rolex Christian?” We find the answer in I John 5:1-5.

*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*  
 1 John 5:1-5 (NIV)

If you are a genuine (not a fake) “Rolex Christian,” then this morning's text says that 4 things are true about you.

- You believe correctly about Christ
- You love others with the love of Christ

- You obey the commands of Christ
- You overcome the world by the power of Christ

### **Believe correctly about Christ**

Verse 1 begins: “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God....”

At first reading, that statement sounds pretty simple. Ask the question: “Do you believe in Jesus Christ?” and many if not most people would say “Yes.” The reason why many if not most people would say “Yes” is because they have misunderstood two things: what it means to “believe” and what it means to believe that Jesus is “the Christ.”

The word for “believe” means much more than “head knowledge” or “intellectual assent.” It means to “rely on,” “place your full confidence in,” or “out your full weight upon.” It’s the difference between “believing” that a plane will take you to Los Angeles and actually boarding the plane and committing your life to it.

To believe in Jesus as “the Christ” is to understand that he is God’s one and only means of salvation. It is only through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to pay for our sins that we can be forgiven by God and adopted into his family. It is to stake your life and your eternity on that truth.

To believe “that Jesus is the Christ” is to agree with the Apostle Peter who boldly declared to the same Jewish high court that engineered Jesus’ death: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12 (NIV)

Perhaps no one said it better than Alfred Plummer, the Professor of New Testament at the University of Durham, England during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that One who was known as a man fulfilled a known and Divine commission; that He who was born and was crucified is the Anointed, the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world. To believe this is to accept both the Old and New Testaments; it is to believe that Jesus is what He claimed to be, One who is equal with the Father, and as such demands of every believer the absolute surrender of self to Him.”

### **Love others with the love of Christ**

John states this truth yet again in the 1<sup>st</sup> verse: “Everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.”

The kind of belief in Christ that John is talking about doesn’t just affect our *minds*. It affects our *relationships*. The “Rolex Christian” doesn’t just think rightly about Christ. He acts lovingly toward people. The first verse plainly states that “right belief” about Christ results in being “born of God” or “born again.” To be “born of God” means that we are infused with the divine life of Jesus Christ in the person of his Holy Spirit. If we have the

life of Christ, then we have the love of Christ. We have the power to love everyone with the same love that Jesus loved people when he walked the earth.

John always put faith and love together. Creed determines conduct. Belief conditions behavior. When we truly believe in Jesus as the Christ, we receive the divine ability to love others like he did.

John wasn't the only apostle who made the inseparable connection of faith and love. Paul did it at least three times.

Ephesians 1:15b-16a – “Ever since I heard about your *faith* in the Lord Jesus and your *love* for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you....” (NIV)

Colossians 1:3-4 – “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your *faith* in Christ Jesus and of the *love* you have for all the saints....” (NIV)

1 Thessalonians 1:3 – “We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by *faith*, your labor prompted by *love*....” (NIV)

The indissoluble union of faith and love can be traced back to the words of Jesus himself. This is no doubt where John himself first learned it.

“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another.” John 13:34 (Msg)

“I demand that you love each other....” John 15:17 (TLB)

Neither Jesus nor John was offering suggestions. They weren't saying: “You ought to believe that Jesus is the Christ and you ought to love one another. C'mon now! Give it 'the old college try.' Make an effort.” This isn't what Christians *ought to do*. It's what authentic, genuine “Rolex Christians” *do*. They do it because the indwelling Christ lives inside of them and empowers them.

Does it mean we “love perfectly” all the time? No, we still have a “sin nature.” Sometimes we fail. But as we grow in Christ, failure becomes more the exception than the rule. If I'm failing to love others consistently with the love of Christ, then I need to reexamine my conversion experience. It could be that I don't have the power to love like Christ because I've truly repented of my sins and trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior from sin and the Lord of my life.

### **Obey the commands of Christ**

John emphasized this characteristic of the “Rolex Christian” in verse 3, “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome....”

Once again, John got this idea directly from the lips of Jesus.

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” John 14:15 (NIV)

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." John 14:21 (NIV)

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching." John 14:23 (NIV)

"He who does not love me will not obey my teaching." John 14:24 (NIV)

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples 12 hours before he was led to the cross. A person's last words are usually the thoughts closest to his heart. Jesus stressed this theme of obedience again and again because he thought it was supremely important.

We know that his top two commands were to love the Lord and love your neighbor. But are there other commandments and if there are, where do we find them?

The answer is: "Yes, there are other commandments. And a good place to start looking is *The Sermon on the Mount* recorded in Matthew 5-7. In that brief sermon, Jesus gave commandments related to handling anger, extending forgiveness, maintaining moral purity, marital faithfulness, keeping your promises, and doing good for difficult people. And that's just in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter!

Maybe you're wondering at this point: "Who can live like that? It sounds impossible!"

Look at the concluding words of the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse: "His commands are not burdensome...."

I'm going to say something that may surprise, even shock you: It's easier to obey than disobey. Obedience isn't burdensome. Sin is burdensome! Obedience results in joy, peace, and satisfaction. Disobedience results in misery, heartache, and regret.

Obedience is possible because of the indwelling Christ! When I remember the power that I have; and when I call on the power that I have; I can live in obedience.

Let's take away the excuses. We disobey because we choose to. We disobey because we make a pre-meditated decision to disregard God's authority and God's power. I don't sin because I can't help it. I sin because in that moment I have decided to commit cosmic treason against the high king of heaven.

Before I move to the last point, I want to make sure we understand what the Bible teaches about obedience. We do not obey God's commands to earn our salvation or to keep our salvation. We obey God's commands as a way of life because that is what it is in the nature of person who has "born of God" to do. Obedience is neither the cause nor the continuation of the Christian life. It is the "natural result" of being "born of God." This is what saved people *do*.

### **Overcomes the world by the power of Christ**

The "Rolex Christian" believes correctly about Christ; loves others with the love of Christ; obeys the commands of Christ; and overcomes the world by the power of Christ.

This encouraging truth is found in verses 4-5, "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

John Stott wrote a wonderful book on "The Sermon on the Mount" entitled *Christian Counter-Culture*. Biblical Christianity is counter-cultural. It is often hated by the world because it goes against the world. As I explained in detail earlier in this series, the term "world" in this context refers to the prevailing world system that stands in opposition to the principles of Scripture.

The 3 characteristics of a "Rolex Christian" are nothing if not counter-cultural. Most of the world doesn't believe correctly concerning Christ. Most of the world doesn't love others with the love of Christ. And most of the world doesn't know much of anything about the commands of Christ, to say nothing of obeying them.

The Greek word John used for "victory" is a word that ought to be familiar to all of you – *nike*. But this "victory" has nothing to do with defeating the world system politically and imposing a sort of Christian theocracy. It has nothing to do with Christians gaining the most powerful seats in government and forcing our collective will on a secular society.

The victory here is purely and entirely 'spiritual.' We "overcome the world" and win the "victory" over the world when we believe the truth about Christ; when we love the world with a level of love that can only be described as supernatural; and when we show the world the "pay-off" in terms of joy and peace when we obey God's commands.

### **Conclusion**

Ironically, it is when we are most different from the world system that the gospel of Jesus Christ is most attractive to a culture that has lost its way.

Our evangelism effectiveness as a church and as individual Christians has nothing to do with buildings, budgets, and programs. It's all about being "Rolex Christians," the authentic people of God.

Perhaps the Christian author and theologian Os Guinness described the secret to impacting lost people for Christ: "We are never more powerful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus than when we ourselves are following Jesus."

Let us follow Jesus by believing correctly about Christ; loving others with the love of Christ; obeying the commands of Christ; and overcoming the world by the power of Christ.

